

# RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN THE CONTEMPORARY ERA

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**Gender equality** is a constituent of development as well as an instrument of development. No country can be deemed developed if half of its population is severely disadvantaged in terms of basic needs, livelihood options, access to knowledge and political voice. Constitution is rightly the most significant touchstone for determining the scope of women's rights in the post independence period. The provisions of adult franchise, non-discrimination on the basis of sex and positive discrimination (or affirmative action) in favour of women and children place Indian women far ahead of their Western counterparts.

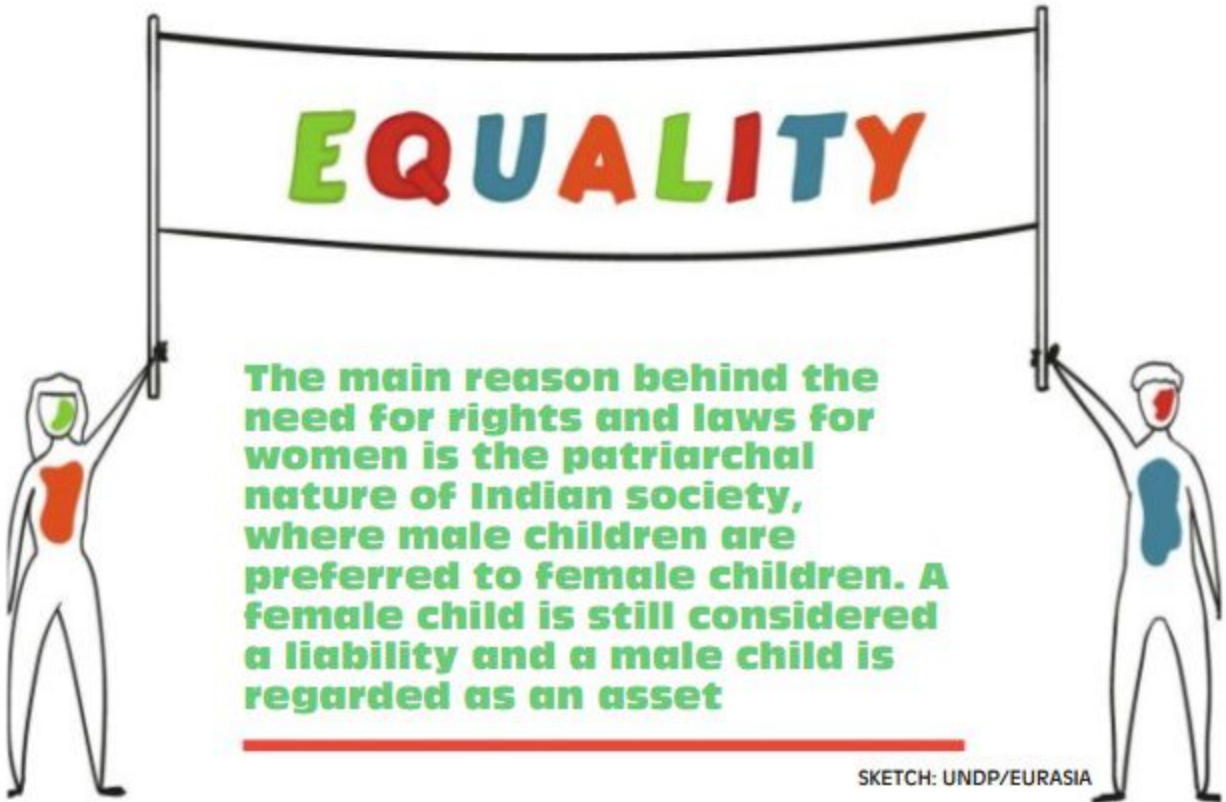
Women in India are being provided with legal security to augment the standards of their economic, social and cultural lives. Over the years, few important legislations for the benefit of women have been designed in India.

**The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956:** This act was passed in 1956 and was further amended and changed in 1986, resulting in the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act also known as PITA. It intends to combat trafficking and sexual exploitation for commercial purposes.

**The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961:** According to this act, taking or demanding dowry is a punishable offence.

**The Equal Remuneration Act of 1976:** This Act does not permit wage discrimination between male and female workers.

**The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986** is an act to prohibit indecent representation of women through



advertisement or in publications, writings, paintings, figures or in any other manner.

**Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005:** It is an Act to protect women from domestic violence.

**Prohibition of Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace Bill, 2010:** It is a legislative act in India that seeks to protect women from sexual harassment at their place of work.

**The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013:** An Indian legislation which provides for amendment of Indian Penal Code, Indian Evidence

Act, and Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 on laws related to sexual offences. This act was passed after the Delhi gangrape incident also known as the Nirbhaya Case, where a physiotherapist intern was brutally beaten and raped on a moving bus in the streets of Delhi on 16 December 2012. After the incident, the three-member committee known as Justice Verma Committee was constituted to make necessary amendments.

The main reason behind the need for rights and laws for women is the patriarchal nature of Indian society, where male children are preferred to female children. A female child is still

considered a liability and a male child is regarded as an asset. The private/public dichotomy exists, where men are considered as authoritarian decision makers whereas the role of women is limited to domestic affairs. However, with burgeoning modernization coupled with the various acts and amendments, the rights of women are steadily being acknowledged and status of women is improving in India.

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